

# Olenka

## Bio

### Multiple music arts grant-award winner

Alexandra “Olenka” Gadzik emigrated from the Carpathian Mountains of Poland with her parents and sister in 1977. Growing up in the multi-cultural atmosphere of New York City nurtured in her a love and affinity for world music. Now with her second professional release, *Rhythms of Another Life*, Olenka’s world fusion pop, relentless grooves and spiraling Euro-fringe melodies, sing the stories of women and foreigners.

While traveling across the U.S. and currently living the Quad-Cities, Olenka has maintained her love of world rhythms. In 2003 she received a grant from the Iowa Arts Council for her project “World Rhythms in Original Music”. In applying for the grant she competed with large organizations like the Cedar Rapids Symphony Orchestra and the Des Moines Opera Company. Olenka’s was the largest grant awarded for an individual artist project in that season.

The project included a 20-venue tour of Iowa and the recording of *Rhythms of Another Life*, with liner notes that contain rhythm notation and talk about the world rhythms used in each song. The CD was recorded in Bloomington, Indiana, famous for the Indiana University School of Music and rich musicianship. Percussionist Jamey Reid co-produced the CD, which features a host of guest musicians. Olenka also has five more CDs-worth of original material waiting to be recorded.

Olenka’s passion for integrating world music with state-of-the-art production is long standing. In 1989 she collaborated with Peruvian buskers, or street musicians, in New York City on her worldbeat song “Cold Faith”. It featured the Peruvian zampona (panpipe) player Ricardo Silva, orchestrated with the recently invented Chapman Stick guitar/bass. That same year “Cold Faith” appeared on the compilation of New York bands entitled *Fresh Kills* and it now appears on her debut CD *Making Arrows*.

While living in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1994 and 1995 Olenka was the frontperson and main songwriter of two bands simultaneously -- the alternative rock Quiver and the world/experimental Rosary. This highly creative time resulted in the private release of *Red*, a compilation of songs from Rosary and Quiver, as well as the recording of Olenka’s first fully orchestrated, studio-length CD, *Making Arrows*. The single “Tear” (rhymes with “bear”) appeared on the compilation *Live From Bloomington*.

Olenka’s live performances usually feature her on acoustic rhythm-guitar accompaniment, in which she is self-taught, and on hand-percussion, particularly Brazilian-style tube shakers. Special mixes of tracks from her recorded material often provide an accompaniment to her live elements to give a fuller representation of her intricate recorded arrangements and driving energy. Her television appearances include B-Town Sounds, and the Creators Series of Quad City Life and Times.

Olenka’s lyrics have always passionately expressed women’s experiences and a subtle, thoughtful spirituality. In addition to the above studies, she has attended graduate classes in theology, continues to study comparative religion, and has contemplated entering a monastic order. She is currently working on a one-woman show of music and art that explores women’s spirituality. The show, called *The Compass Rose: Integrating the Magdalene*, consists of a tour with her paintings called “song-stills”, and a poly-media lecture component.

In 1993 Olenka graduated from State University of New York’s Empire State College with a degree in Slavic Folklife and Material Culture. Slavic excerpts and vocal ornamentation, particularly those of the Carpathian and Tatra mountains, often appear in her music. Olenka’s studies also include audio engineering at the Institute of Audio Research in New York City; as well as three years of classical voice; two years of music theory; flamenco; and Latin drumming.

Currently Olenka is performing in English and Spanish, moonlighting as a chi gung instructor, and fulfilling the obligations of her fourth music arts grant award – this one from Quad City Arts for “World Rhythms for Young Musicians”.

## Inspired Arts & Letters

2916 Dubuque St.  
Davenport, IA 52803  
(563) 529-3219, [info@olenka.com](mailto:info@olenka.com)